HARLEQUIN

The Seduction Bid

Kazuko Fujita

Original Text by Amanda Browning

The Seduction Bid

By Kazuko Fujita

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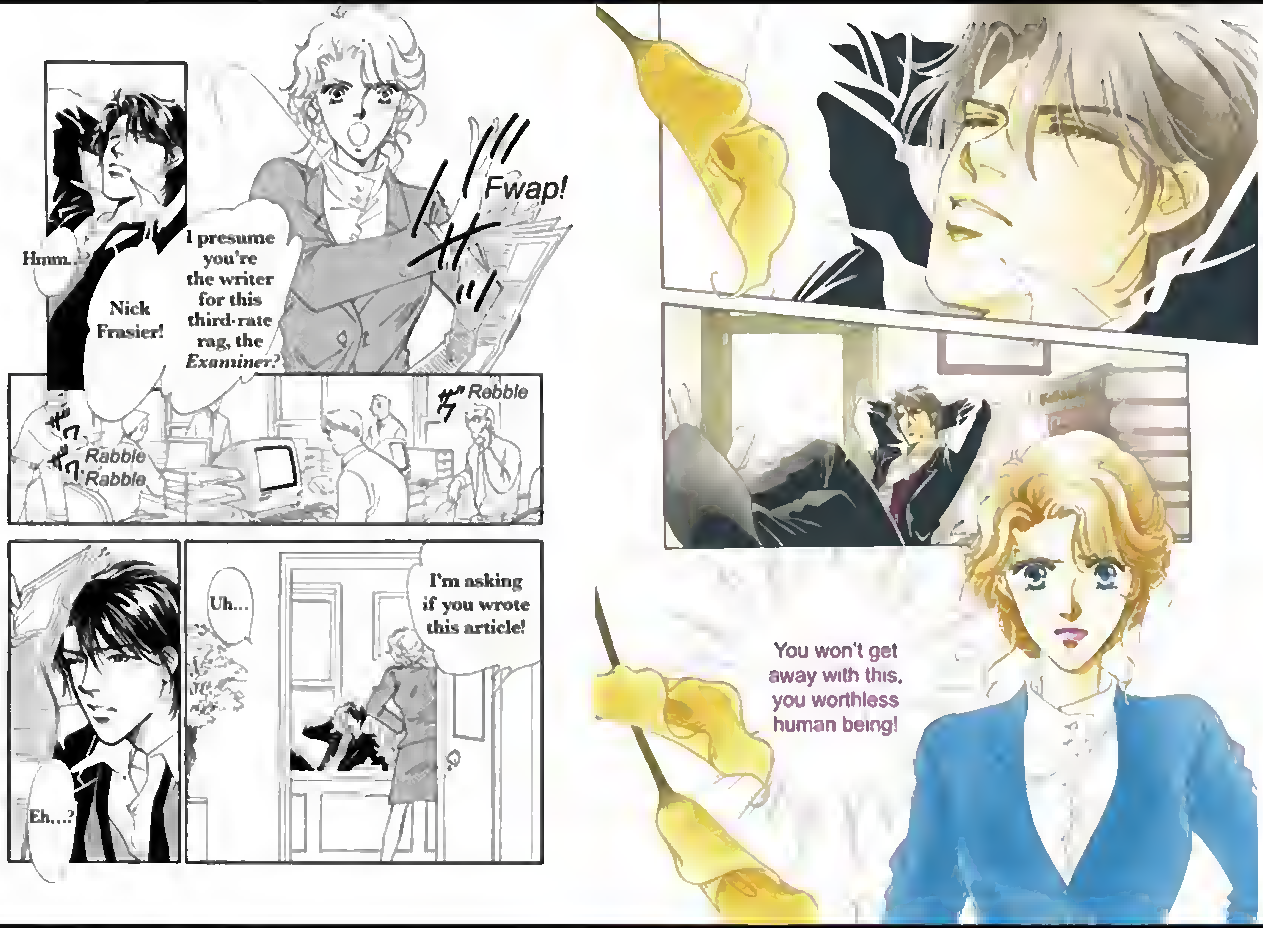
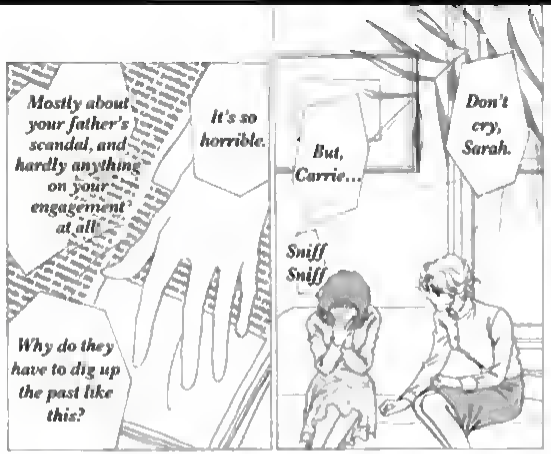

Hmm...?
Nick Frasier!
I presume you're the writer for this third-rate rag, the *Examiner*?
Fwap!
Rabble
Rabble
Rabble
Eh...?
Uh...
I'm asking if you wrote this article!
You won't get away with this, you worthless human being!


Mostly about your father's scandal, and hardly anything on your engagement at all!
It's so horrible.
Why do they have to dig up the past like this?
But, Carrie...
Sniff Sniff
Don't cry, Sarah.

Now don't cry, Sarah.
What if Mark takes back his proposal?
Leave it to me. I'll make them sorry they printed this!

You trash!
Flap
Ow...
Pound Pound Pound Pound Pound
You can presume so long as you do it well please, quietly.
what you damned

And that's all you have to say for yourself?
My best friend, Sarah, is in tears because of this blasted article!

That's right! She's been crying buckets!
Pound Pound Pound
...In tears?

Fantastic.
You have a mouth on you, but you're quite a looker.
Blush
Perfect proportions...
...classy and graceful, to boot.
Who's going to take responsibility for this garbage writing!
Don't try to change the subject!

Pound
Pound
What are you, drunk?
Pound
Wow. That bad, Princess?
Princess?
Pound
Pound
I'm not drunk. I'm hungover.
I missed my flight.
Now, thanks to a red-eye flight, I've been awake for two days.
I was at a friend's wedding yesterday.
Too bad for you!
Hmm...

Wha...
He's so tall..!
Thump...
They're a little bloodshot...
...they're strong and mysterious gray eyes.
...but his eyes...
Gulp
This man..

Slump
You look terrible.
I suppose to write gutter-trash articles...
...the writer has look to be from the gutter himself?
Did you eat glass for breakfast or something, Miss Sharp Tongue?
Clunk
Aw, did I hurt your feelings?
Maybe you can imagine how it feels to have a slanderous article written about you.
Is that all?

Gasp
A-Anyway...
What am I doing?
Apologize to Sarah!
Or at least print an apology!
Got it?
#^%&*!
The world doesn't revolve around you.
SLAM!
Whoa!
Out of my way!
Complete waste of time!
He has *something* that other men...
...don't...
We're being drawn to each other...
...somehow...
Sway

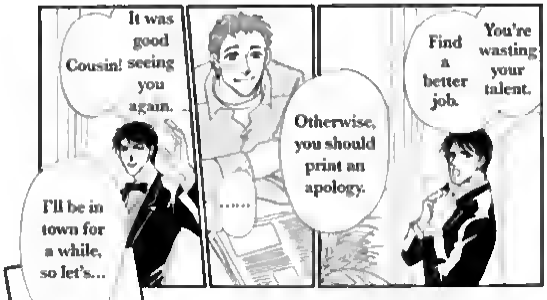
She's proud.
Out-going.
A woman fiercely loyal to her friends.
Fantastic, isn't she?
She left this much of an impact in just a few minutes.
Incred-ible!
...If I let her get away...
She came to complain about Nick Frasier.
She thought I was you.
What was that all about?
You could have just told her.
Didn't get a chance.
She was on a roll.
Glaring, yelling...
...looking gorgeous...
Most guys wouldn't stand a chance.

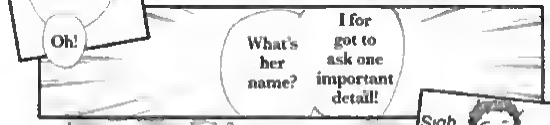
…but I hear she still hasn't gotten over him.
Russ died five years ago…
She was married to Russ Maitland, the son of a former diplomat.
It won't be easy.
Smile
I'm used to finding ways to get what I want.
This article really is pretty trashy.
Anyway, Nick…
It's no wonder she was furious.
The best in the business, too.
Guess hotel royalty like Lance Kersee isn't afraid of anything.
Sheesh.
I'm just a financial adviser.

Whaaat?
You just met her!
A minute is long enough if it's meant to be!
A widow? What's the problem, then?
Give it up. She's a widow.
I've got it!
I'm going to marry her!

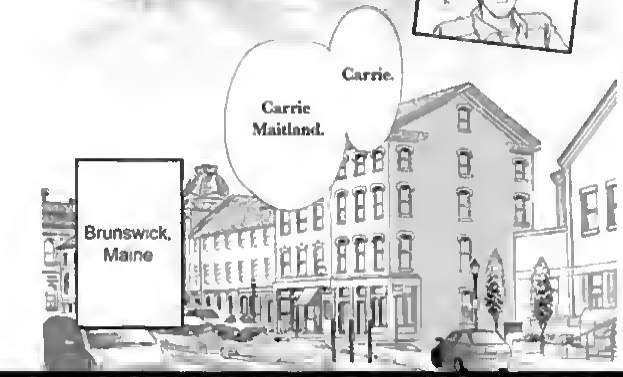
I'm sorry, Sarah.
STAFF ONLY
It didn't go very well.

Oh? What did he say?
I got a call from Mark!
Thanks for trying.
That's all right, Carrie.

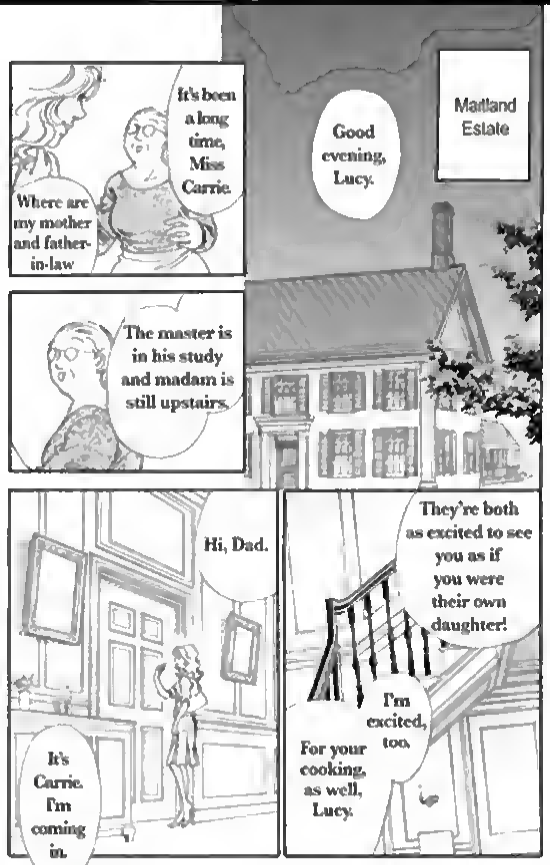

It was good seeing you again, Cousin!
I'll be in town for a while, so let's...
.....
Otherwise, you should print an apology.
You're wasting your talent.
Find a better job.
Oh!


What's her name?
I for got to ask one important detail!

Sigh


Carrie.
Carrie Maitland.
Brunswick, Maine

Hmm—?
He was really awful, and a complete jerk...!
I mean!
Gasp
Sarah...
Mamage
You'll be at the wedding, won't you?
Of course.
You'd better catch it!
I'll be throwing the bouquet at you!
Sigh
...Well, I had a tough time.
Sarah...!
He said that he loves me no matter what some article says!
Oh, Carrie! I'm so happy!
He was that bad?
I got so angry that I was just scolding him by the end.
Where did it go wrong?
...
Yes...
...and very hand-some.


Where are my mother and father-in-law
It's been a long time, Miss Carrie.
Good evening, Lucy.
Maitland Estate
The master is in his study and madam is still upstairs.
Hi, Dad.
It's Carrie. I'm coming in.
They're both as excited to see you as if you were their own daughter!
I'm excited, too.
For your cooking, as well, Lucy.

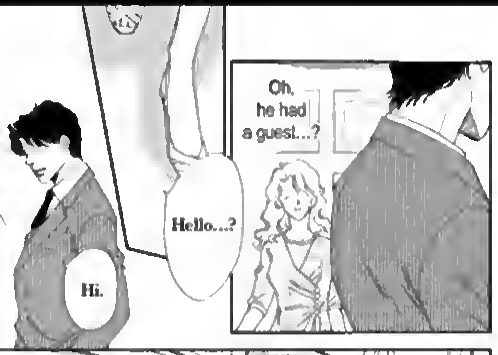
This wedding ring will never be new again.
.. deep in my heart..
. will be with me forever.
The scars from that day are gone now...
. but this scar

What are you doing here...?
I was invited for dinner. You aren't the only Maitland I know.

You know my in-laws?
That's impossible!

My father-in-law must not know who you really are.
Otherwise, there's no way they'd invite you!
Once I tell him, he'll throw you out!

Oh?
Care to make a wager on that?


Hi.
Hello...?
Oh, he had a guest...?

Y-You...!
Nice to see you again, Princess.

Oh, no...
All right, then. It's a bet!
You're crazy! There's no way I can lose!
A date?
Carrie!
Dad! That man is a complete...
Wait... L-Lance...?
Hello, Lance. It's good to see you, too.
Mom!
Dad!
It's been too long!

Why not?
Sorry. I don't gamble.
A wager?
Don't think you can win?
Tap
Hmph! Of course I do!
There's just nothing left to chance here.
...you go on a date with me.
Jump
Tap
If I win...
Tap
I'd make this bet even if my chances were one in a million.

You still call them Mom and Dad, huh?
So the Maitlands... ...are the parents of your late husband?
He knew I'd made a mistake and toyed with me!
I don't believe it!
You really are a worthless human being, Lance Kersee!
So?
Stop calling me that.
Still angry at me, Princess?
Why? It suits you perfectly.

She has me confused with my cousin.
Let me introduce you, Carrie.
Kersee? But...
This is Lance Kersee.
Your cousin?
No thank you!
Maybe I should introduce you, Carrie.
He's actually a good guy.
So the writer at the Examiner is your cousin?
I see.

No...
Rustle
You want me.
Just like I want you.
I hate you, Lance!
D...
D-Don't be stupid!
It's... Lance.
Scared to say my name?
L.A.N.C.E.
Scared? Of course not!
Are you still making fun of me, Mr. Kersee?
Lance.
Gulp
Gasp
That wasn't so hard, was it?
See?

Rustle
...Still don't believe me?

Smile
Wh... What are you...
Thump
Thump
My pulse...
...it's racing...
Thump
Thump
Thump

Fwoosh!
Carrie!
Lance!
Ah!
Slip

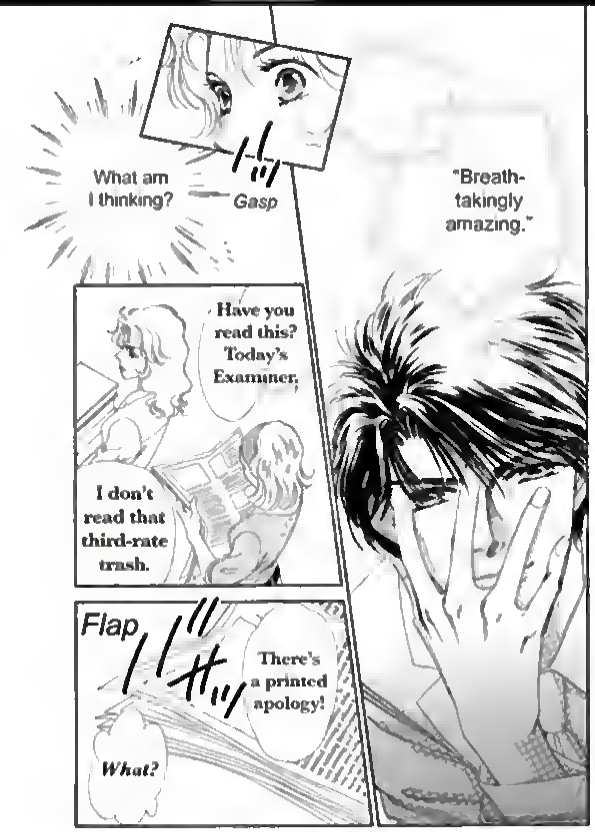
I'll be right there!
Oh, a customer.
Ding Dong
My pulse...
...is still a little fast.
Huh?
What a great view.

Lance...

I didn't think I'd get to hold you like this today.
W-What?
I-I'm sorry.
Phew
Carrie...
Thank you...
...but his eyes show real concern.
He's making jokes...
Lance...

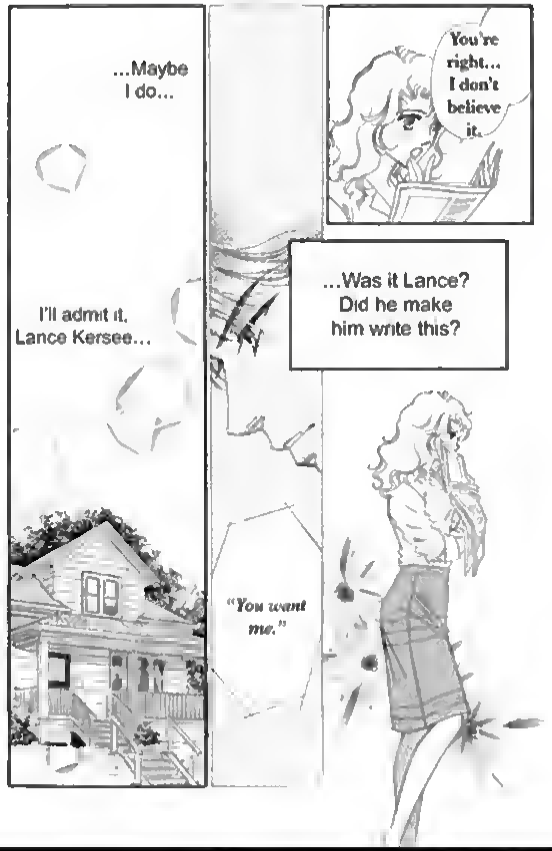
What date?
You lost our bet.
Right. I'll get out of your way.
I still won. A bet is a bet.
You cheated!
I'll pick you up at yo ur house at seven.
Wear a sexy dress for me, okay?

What am I doing?
Gasp!
I'm back!
ガラン
Ding Ding
W-Welcome back, Gerri.
Pat Pat
Oh! My!
Date?
I was just leaving. I only came to arrange our date tonight.
Never mind. Get lost.
What a hunk!


What am I thinking?
Gasp
"Breath-takingly amazing."
Have you read this? Today's Examiner.
I don't read that third-rate trash.
Flap
There's a printed apology!
What?

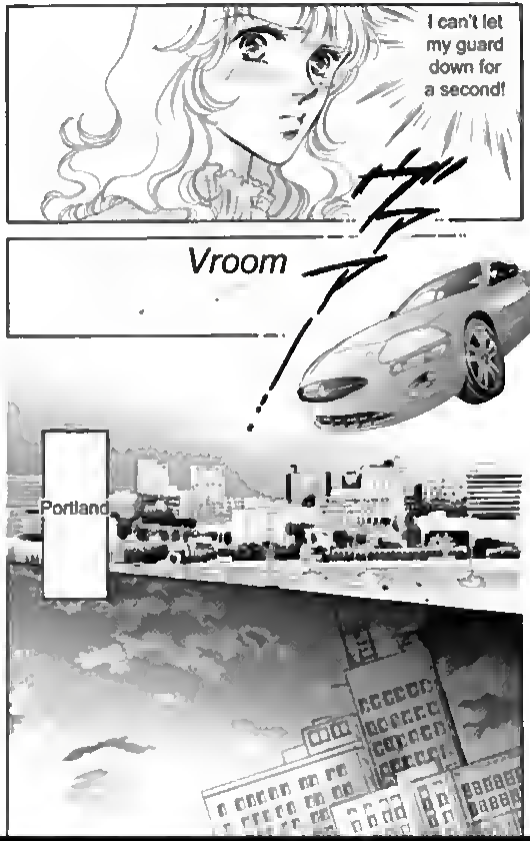
You're crazy!
What a great-looking guy!
No way!
"Good-looking?"
Not the adjective I would use.
"Irritating" or "cheating"...
"Arousing" . "Sexy"...

No way will I wear a sexy dress for you.
.. but ...I'm not going to make it easy for you!
Tight around the neck
Long sleeves
Long skirt
Disap-pointed?
H-Hi...
Not really.
Now I know you'd be sexy wearing a burlap sack.
Wha...?
W-What do you think you're doing?
Just getting a kiss.
Swish


...Maybe I do...
You're right... I don't believe it.
...Was it Lance? Did he make him write this?
I'll admit it, Lance Kersee...
"You want me."

My uncle runs this hotel.
How did you get such a great table?
That's right. The Kersee family are hotel owners.
I have to admit, I'm surprised.
You made them print the apology?
...I read the paper today.

Well... We didn't meet under the best circum-stances.
Why's that?


I can't let my guard down for a second!
Vroom
Portland

I'll think of a way you can make it up to me.
What?
Remembering something sad?
It's a beautiful view.

I thought he'd try to make me feel more indebted.
That's all.
I thought my cousin could do better.
Thanks, anyway.
I should make amends for being so rude.
Make amends?
Wait!
I'm very...
How...? I'll apologize.
Really? How?

You still mourn him?
Enough to keep wearing his ring?
...Yes.
Rub
How... ...did he die?
I... It reminded me that Russ...
...was afraid of heights.
You looked sad.
.....?
...Russ...
Your late husband.
...Yes.
It's been five years.

I don't want your pity.
Besides, it hasn't been all bad.
...It must have been horrible for you.
Clatter
Don't act so indifferent!
You could have been killed, too!
Lance?

They got away.
Shot? By who?
He was shot.
You were there...?
...Yes. I tried to save him.
Lance...

You've never been married, have you?
Why do you think that?
You have?
I would never date someone who's married!
Of course it would!
Would it bother you?
I'll never see Russ again.
That's all I know for sure.
...I'm sorry.
That day...
...will never disappear for me.
It's all right. I didn't mean it to come out that way

I put my pants on one leg at a time, like everyone else.
I'm just a normal guy
I don't understand you. You're rude, then a gentleman.
Giggle
Here.
Carrie...

Smile
Then don't worry.
This is a proper date.
Vroom
Thank you for a delicious dinner.
Um... Lance?
Why are you following me?
What kind of man would I be if I didn't see you to your doorstep?

A fiery kiss...
Spark!
...Oh...
I-I don't know what you mean.
L..
I know you do.
You just can't accept it because you're still angry with me.
Should I prove it?
No...
Not like this...
You said you would make amends.
I won't take anything less than a kiss.
Don't you feel the same way...?
I want you so badly...

I'm the one...
who has to decide
"I'll wait"
Meaning he wants me to decide
His kiss ..
I could have pulled away if I wanted to..
...could have said no...
...but...
I'll wait until you're ready.
I know.
Good night...
...Princess.
Slam
Rustle
Carrie...
W-Wait...!
You're not coming inside.
.....?

Sarah...
I was... out.
With who? Where?
...
Fine, I'll tell you. But no more questions!
I had dinner with Lance Kersee.
EEEE!
I said no questions!
Is he really handsome?
How did you meet him?
The Lance Kersee?
.....?
Did he make a move?
Yeah, right! How far did you get?

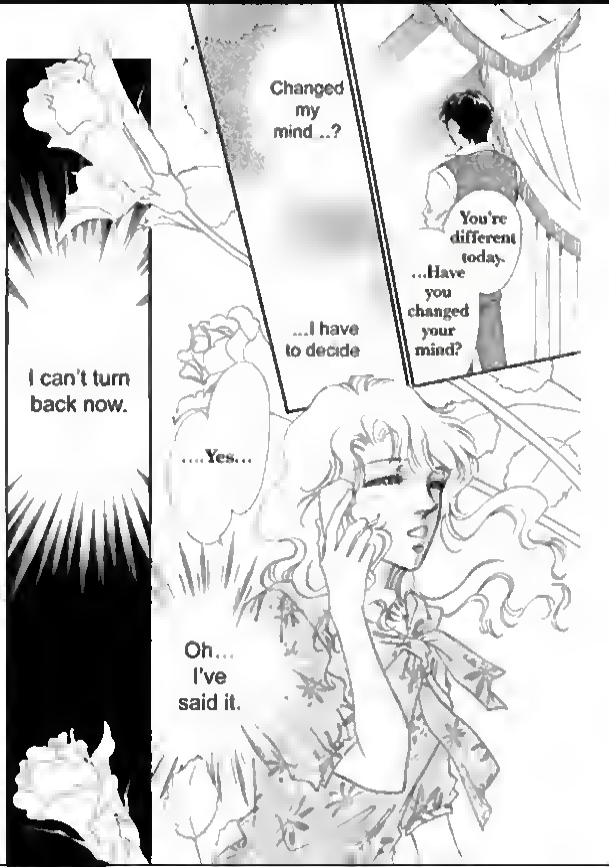
Where did you go last night?
Carrie!

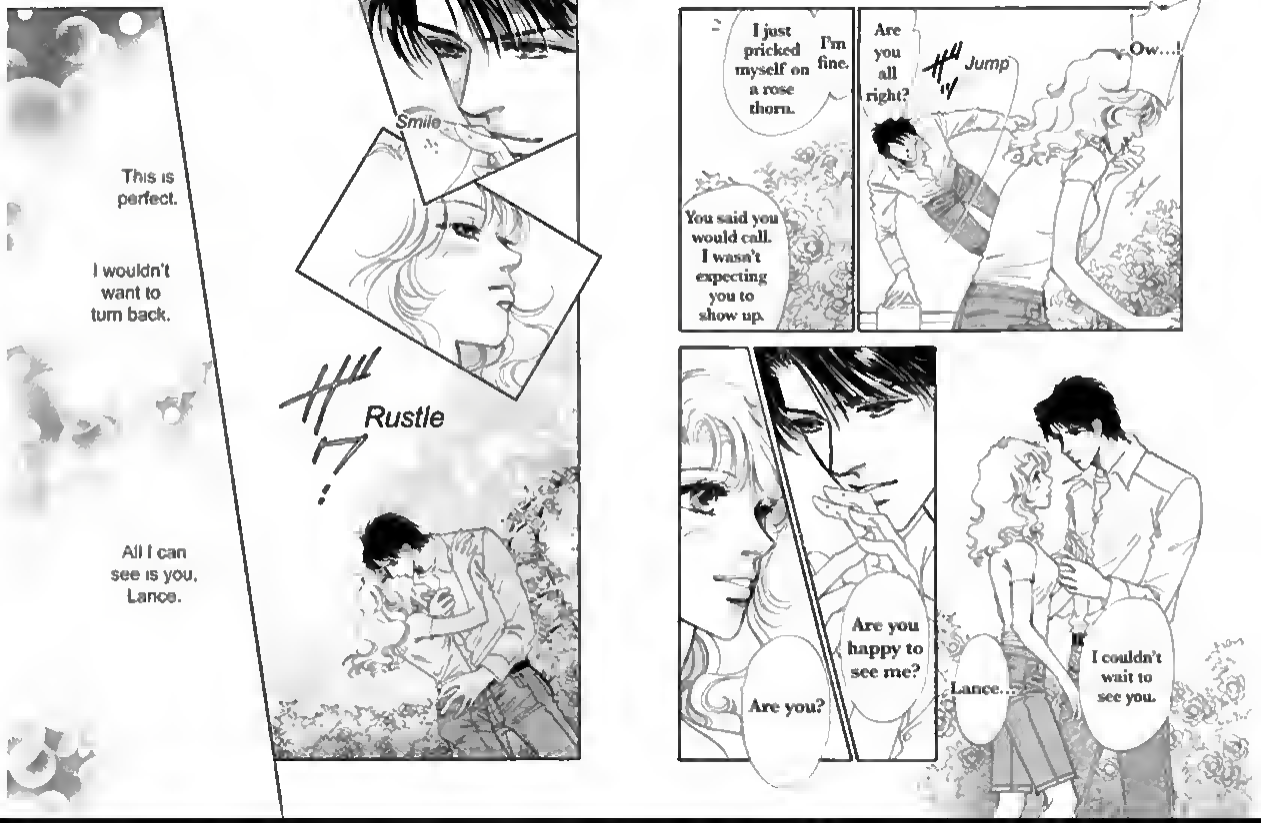
Carrie... Are you sure you told me everything about last night?
O-Of course.
They must have been expensive!
These roses are gorgeous!
Is there a card?
Nope. I guess he thought you'd know who they were from.
Ring
R
R
R
R
Let's eavesdrop!
Oh, boy!
Slam!
STAFF ONLY
It might just be a call from work!
Defi-nitely him.
It's him.
I'll think about it.
Hmm... I see.
He sounds great. You'd better nab him, Carrie!
Slam!
Some-thing came for you!
Oh, my...!

Do what?
I can't do it over the phone.
But... Oh, shoot.
Kiss you, of course.
Hmm. That sounds nice.
Then what?
.....?
Ha ha!
You're enjoying teasing me, aren't you?
You're good at this.
Good at what?
Temptation.
Hmm.
You're tempted?

I saw them in a flower shop and they reminded me of you.
Was it their thorns?
Oh?
Lance ..
Yes. Thank you.
Ahem ...Hello?
Did you like the roses?
Ha Ha Ha あっはっは
But if I treat you kindly, you'll return the favor. ...Right?
You're just covered in thorns, aren't you?

Good morning, Princess!
Jump
Will Lance call...?
Phew
It's so stupid.
I've been watching the phone all morning


I can't turn back now.
Changed my mind...?
...I have to decide
You're different today.
...Have you changed your mind?
....Yes...
Oh... I've said it.

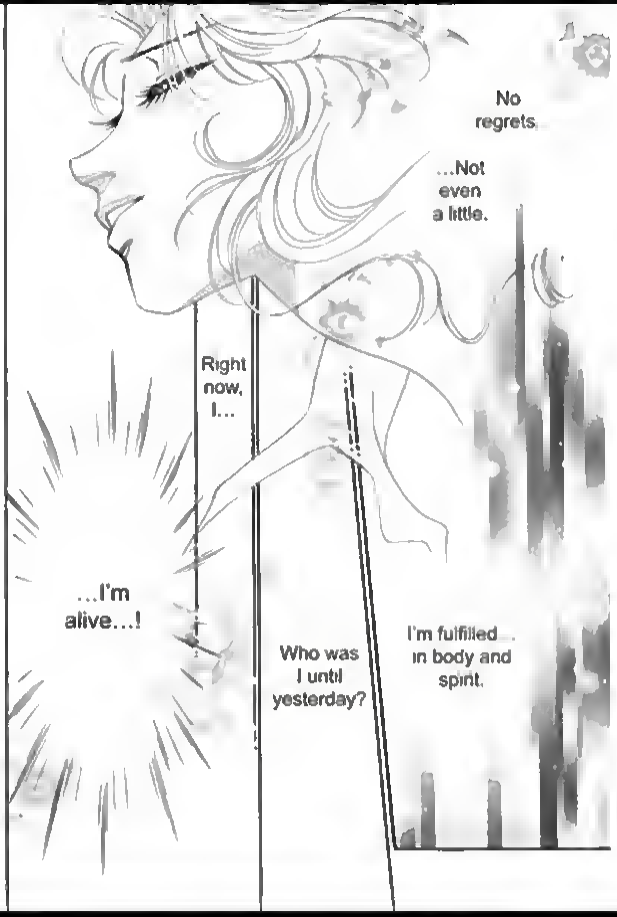

This is perfect.
I wouldn't want to turn back.
All I can see is you, Lance.
Smile
Rustle
I just pricked myself on a rose thorn.
I'm fine.
You said you would call. I wasn't expecting you to show up.
Are you all right?
Jump
Ow...!
Are you?
Are you happy to see me?
Lance...
I couldn't wait to see you.

Slide
Carrie...
I want to make love with you.
Now.
Lance...
.. No. I can't wait any longer.
Sweep
Ah...!
It's now or never, then. Before you change your mind.

Lance...
It's like a whirlwind...
Lance's passion and my own...
...are coming together...

Lance...
There you are.
Did I wake you?
No.
...No.
Having regrets?
Squeak
Squeak
Squeak
Squeak
Kchik
Meow

It's a beautiful garden. The house is nice, too.
You lived here with your husband?
Maybe you'd rather not talk about it.
It's all right.
Thank you.
I lived with Russ in Ohio, where his business was.
Business?
He was a veterinarian. Russ and I both loved animals.
Squeak
Smile
You're curious about Russ?
A little.


No regrets.
...Not even a little.
Right now, I...
...I'm alive...!
Who was I until yesterday?
I'm fulfilled... in body and spirit.

Several weeks later
Hum
Hum
You're in a good mood.
Oh?
Lance...
Rustle
....kissing me.
...you're here now...
But even though you were married to him...

I mean...
...and I'm always thinking about him.
...being with Lance is fun...
That's impossible...!
In love? Me?
That doesn't mean it's love!
Absolutely not...!
...with Lance Kersee.
I...
...am not in love..

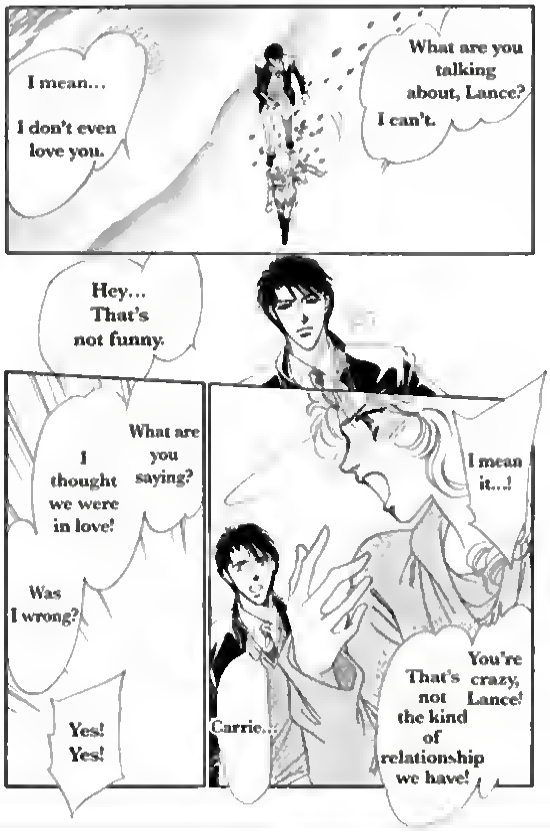
Must be nice to be in love.
Love? Don't be stupid!
Tap
Tap Tap
What did you say?
Slam!
STAFF ONLY
.....?
Huh...?

He was only in town for a while.
Once his business is finished, he'll be gone...
...That's right
Lance isn't from around here.
...to Denver.
...but I have to get back...
I tried to do as much work as I could from here...
The day after tomorrow.
When?
That soon?
It's so far... Denver.

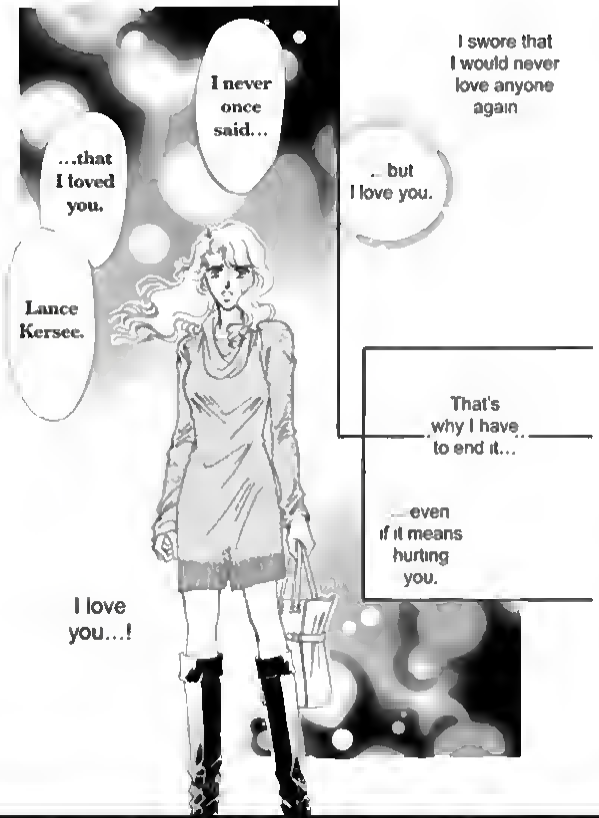
Fwoosh
Lap Lap
Leave...?
...Oh.
Step
I have to leave soon.
You seem down.
You're the one who's been sighing. Do I?
Sigh
...Right.

I want you to marry me...
...Princess...
Fwoosh
I...
...love you.
Since it's only two more days, I want to spend every minute with you.
..But it's just..
.. that it's so sudden ..
This might be a good reason to end it here.
It's just an adult relationship, after all. Not love .. It would have to end sooner or later.
What...?
Then... ..how about the rest of our lives?

I love you!
I don't love you.
Carrie...
Look at me.
Your eyes are always honest
They don't lie.
Now, look at me.


I mean... I don't even love you.
What are you talking about, Lance?
I can't.
Hey... That's not funny.
What are you saying?
I thought we were in love!
Was I wrong?
Yes! Yes!
I mean it...!
Carrie...
You're crazy, Lance! That's not the kind of relationship we have!

Fwoosh
Squeak
Squeak

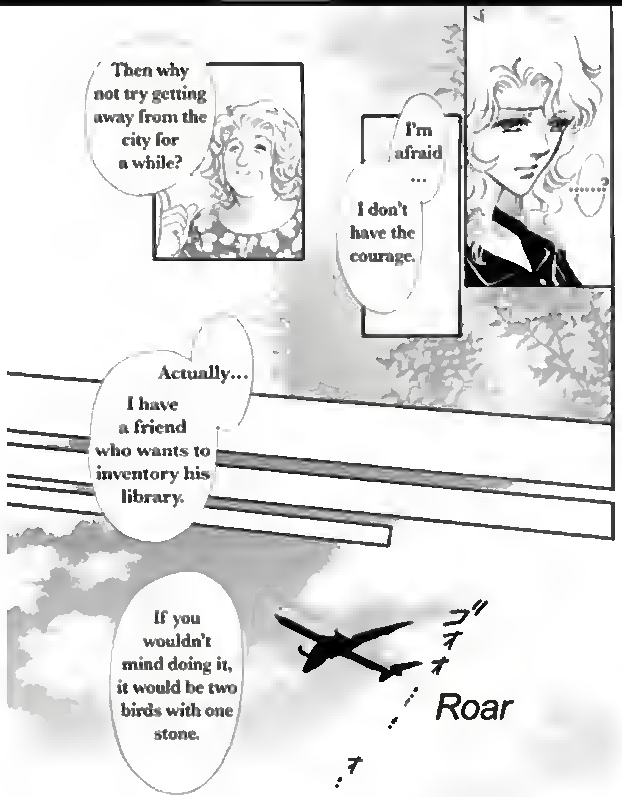

I never once said...
...that I loved you.
Lance Kersee.
I swore that I would never love anyone again
...but I love you.
That's why I have to end it...
...even if it means hurting you.
I love you...!

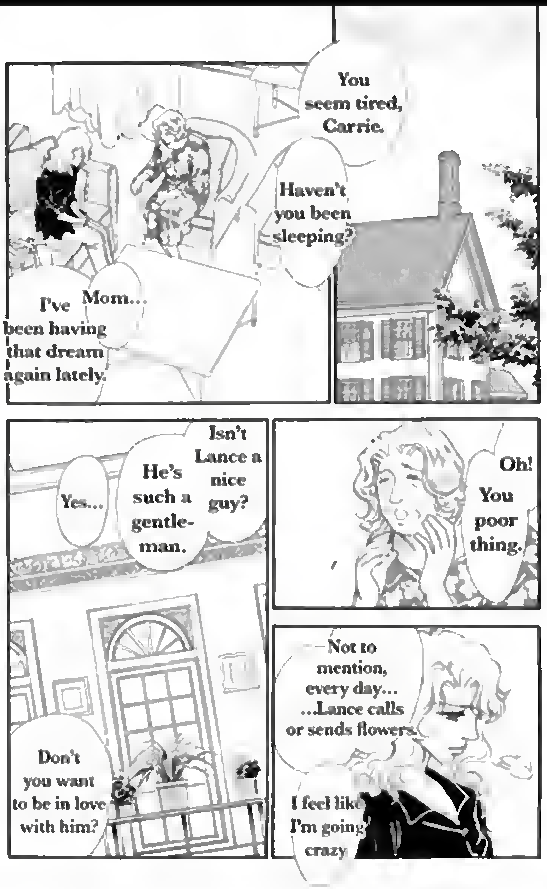
Na
...
No...
Whinny
There, there. Good girl.
Carrie? Where are you?
Gasp
Mmph!

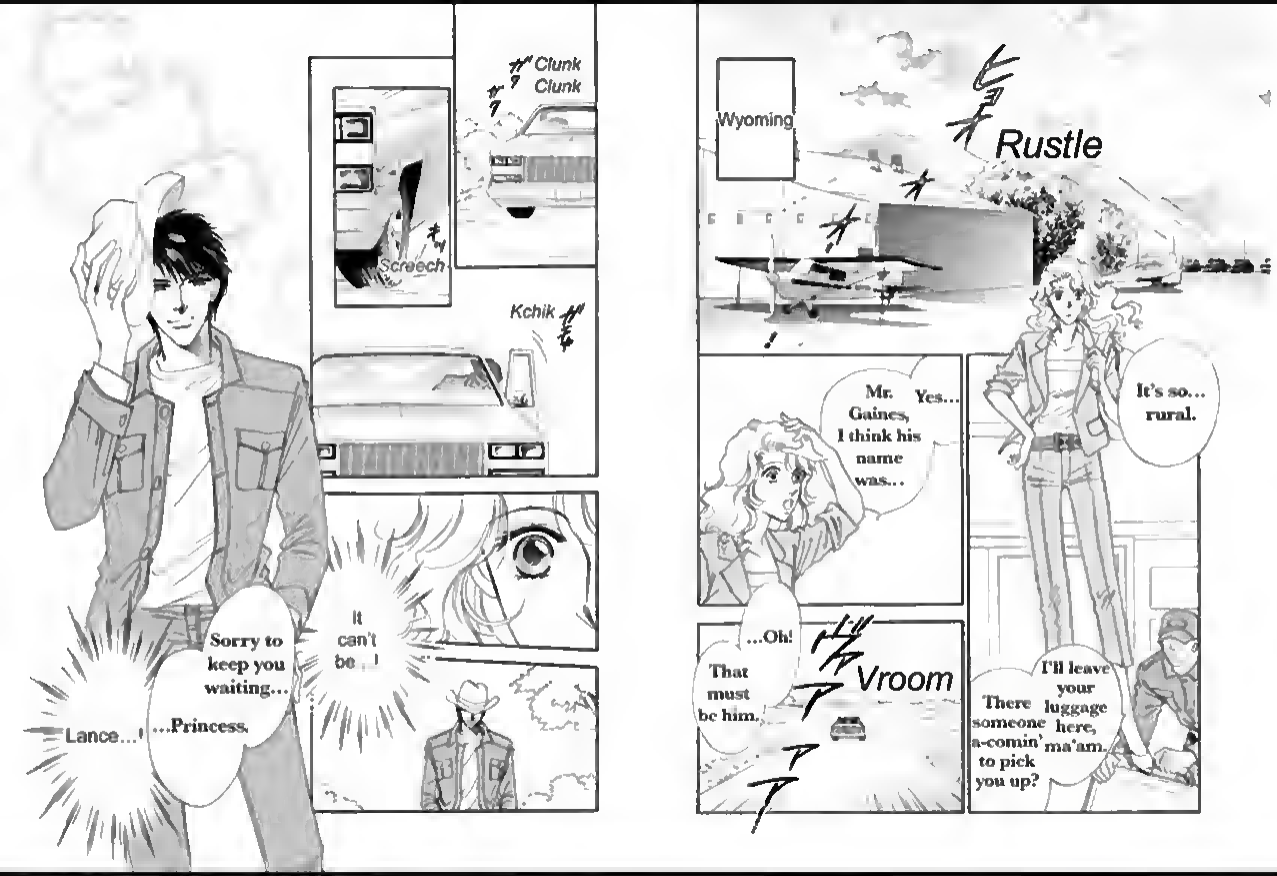
R
R
R
R
R
Ring
Ring
Ring
...you still won't answer my calls?
It's been two weeks...
It's Lance.
Beep
STAFF ONLY
...I'll be sending more flowers.
Beep

That's why I can't love again.
I never...
I can't ever love anyone again...
My heart breaking...
Losing someone I love.
...want to go through that again.
Lance...

Gasp
Blam!
Carrie...
Whinny!
...A dream
The same dream...
I haven't had it in so long...


Then why not try getting away from the city for a while?
I'm afraid ...
I don't have the courage.
.....?
Actually... I have a friend who wants to inventory his library.
If you wouldn't mind doing it, it would be two birds with one stone.
Roar


You seem tired, Carrie.
Haven't you been sleeping?
Mom...
I've been having that dream again lately.
Isn't Lance a nice guy?
He's such a gentle-man.
Yes...
Don't you want to be in love with him?
Oh! You poor thing.
Not to mention, every day... ...Lance calls or sends flowers.
I feel like I'm going crazy


Clunk
Clunk
Screech
Kchik
Sorry to keep you waiting...
...Princess.
Lance...!
It can't be...!
Wyoming
Rustle
Mr. Gaines, I think his name was...
Yes...
It's so... rural.
...Oh!
That must be him.
Vroom
There someone a-comin' to pick you up?
I'll leave your luggage here, ma'am.

Thunk!
I want to talk to you, Carrie.
Talk? About the weather, maybe? Or who will be the next president?
...Why do we have to end our relationship?
You haven't told me anything.
You... ...and your partner in crime!
You think you're so smart, don't you?
Lance Kersee!
You were giving me the runaround.
I asked her to do it.
Don't talk about Mrs. Maitland like that.
This is kidnapping!
You jerk! Stop the car!
Someone call the police!
Vroom
You're saying it's my fault?
Sure am.

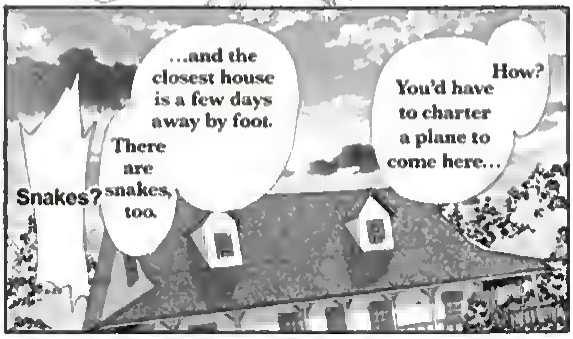
I used to... Not any more...
You said you liked animals. Have you ever ridden?
.....
Why not?
I-It has nothing to do with you! More importantly...
Is there really a library to inventory?
Is there really a Mr. Gaines?
If it's all a lie, I'm leaving this instant!
.....?
How am I supposed to do that?
Just forget about me.
There aren't any cows on this ranch?
Huh?
Where are all the cows?
...Horse ranch?
It's a horse ranch, actually.

Yawn
This is so strange...
...but I'm glad to see him.
I should be angrier...
That's all I can think about.

Right.
Then we're here by ourselves?
I get to have you all to myself, Princess.

The library is real.
I'll show you tomorrow.
Gaines is a friend of mine.
He's letting me stay here at his house.

I'm leaving!
Clatter
Clattar
Clatter


Snakes?
There are snakes, too.
...and the closest house is a few days away by foot.
How?
You'd have to charter a plane to come here...

Whinny
How strange

It's funny. Seeing Lance again seems to have driven it off
I slept so deeply, I didn't have the dream
The morning sunlight feels so good
Whinny
Jump
...Horses...

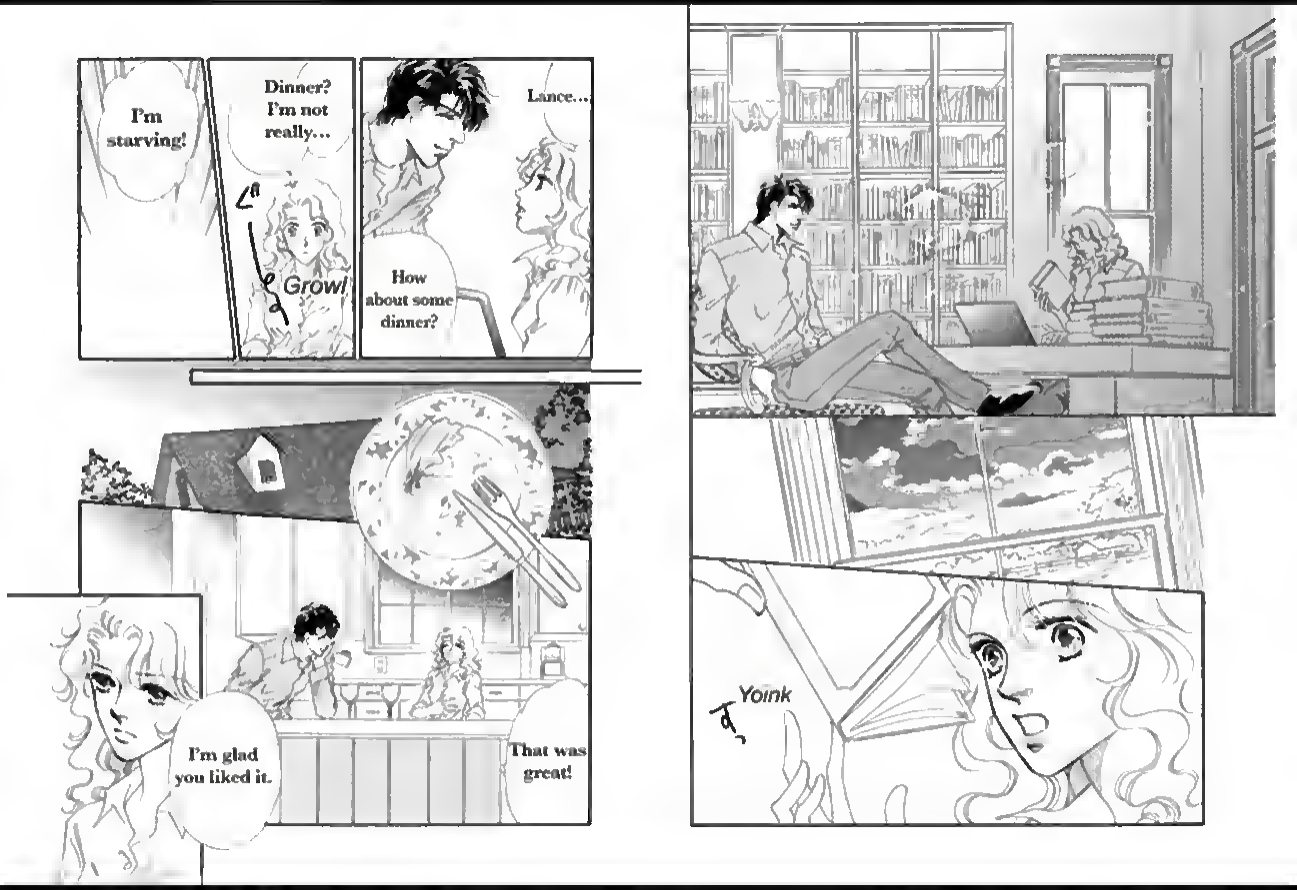
This is amazing!
Oh, my...!

Somehow, I feel calm watching these horses...
Gallop
Gallop
Gallop
Gallop

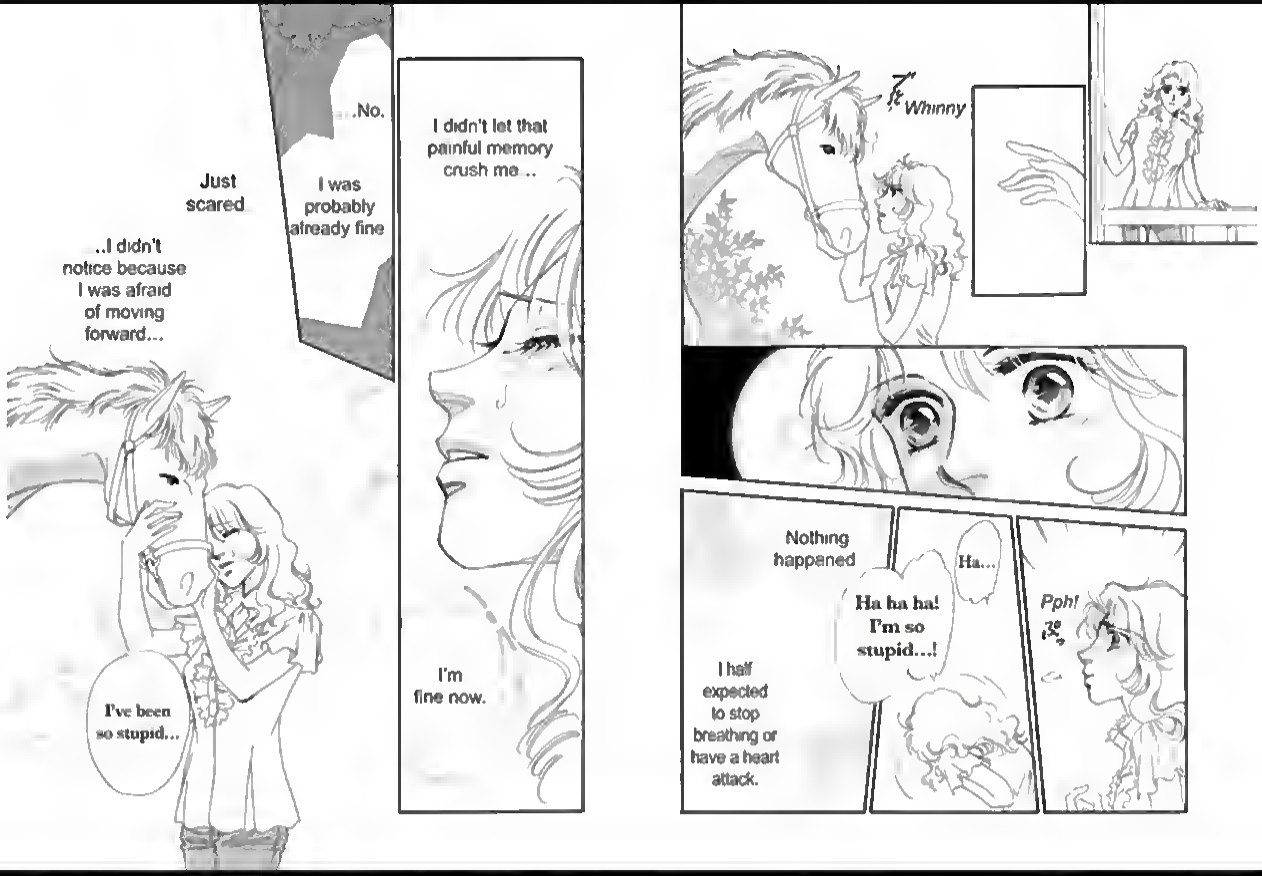
Tap
Tap
Tap

It's wonderful!
I thought you might like it.
I found you a computer. You can make the inventory on this.
Lunch will be at...

Kchik
Are you listening?
Oh! This is a first edition!
So is this!

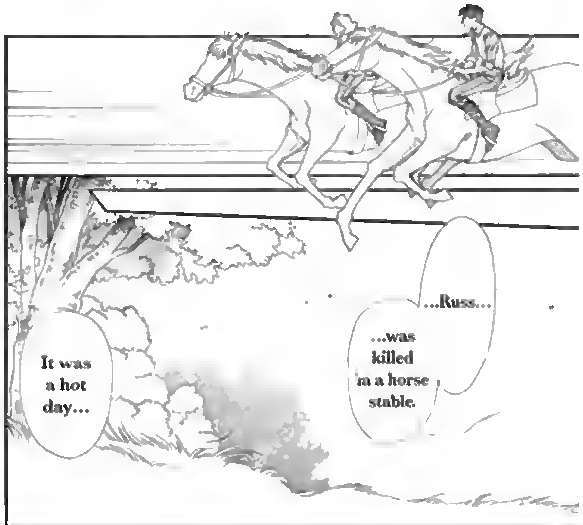

I'm starving!
Dinner? I'm not really...
Grow!
Lance...
How about some dinner?
That was great!
I'm glad you liked it.
Yoink

Tap
Tap
Whinny
Whinny
I believe in you
You wanted to talk, right?
Only when you're ready.
Why aren't you asking me anything?
About what?
.....
Smile
You will be.
What if I'm not?


I've been so stupid...
..I didn't notice because I was afraid of moving forward...
Just scared
...No.
I was probably already fine
I didn't let that painful memory crush me ..
I'm fine now.
Whinny
Nothing happened
I half expected to stop breathing or have a heart attack.
Ha...
Ha ha ha! I'm so stupid...!
Pph!

I didn't notice anything was off until the two men appeared.
Russ was making calls in the house... ...and I was tending to the horses by myself...
They pointed a gun at me
Before I knew it they had pushed me down, torn my clothes
I thought it was the end... ...and then...

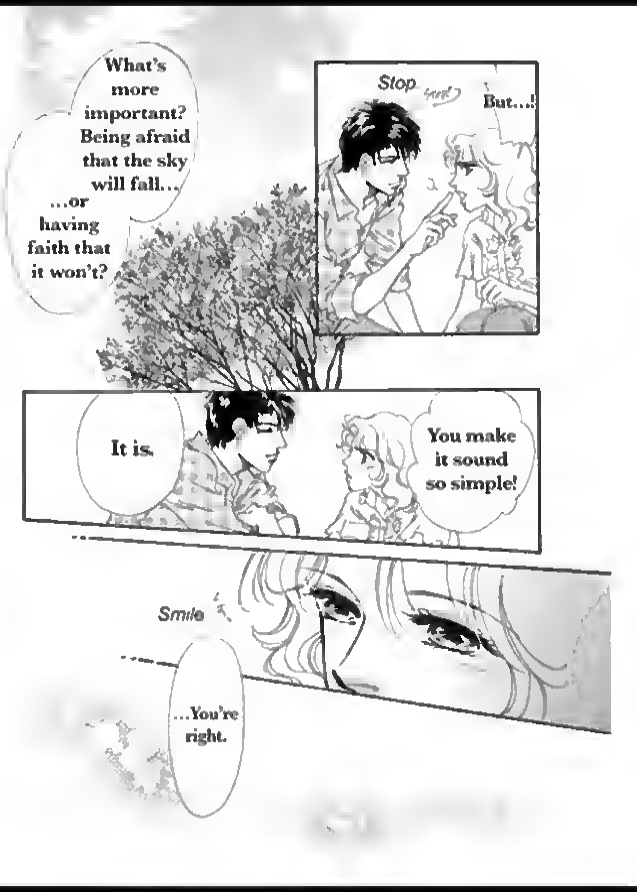
Shall we take a ride?
...I'll tell you everything ...
Carrie...
Lance.

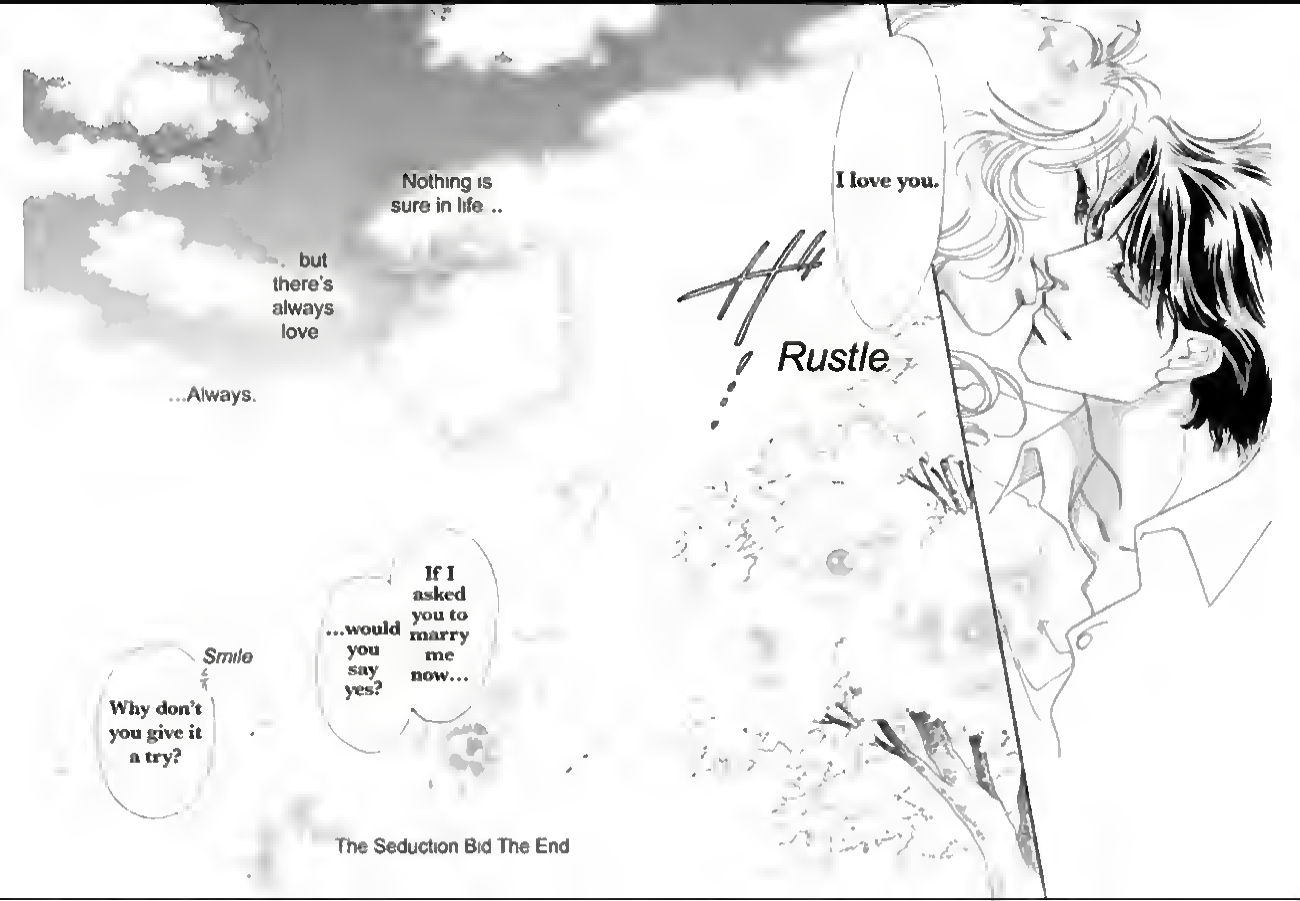

It was a hot day...
...Russ... ...was killed in a horse stable.

I knew that it would be too late to help him...
...so... ...I just held him.
It took five minutes for him to stop breathing ...
That was all I could do.
...Those five minutes felt so long...
With his last breath, he said "I love you"...
...and died.
Carrie?
Russ...!
No ..!
Where are you?
Don't come this way!
Russ!
Blam!
...Russ ...
...was shot and killed, saving me from being raped.
The men ran.
When I came to, I was holding Russ in my arms, covered with blood.

When I think about something happening to you...
...I get so terrified...
I'm so scared...
...of losing you...
Do I have that kind of courage?
It's all right.
I won't leave you alone.
It's all right, Lance. I wanted to tell you.
It's because you gave me time to be strong.
Hug
That's enough!
That's enough, Carrie.
I'm sorry to make you remember.
This peace...
This joy...
Whinny
I know Lance will give me so much more.
If... If I can find the courage...

Having faith...
He's right. I just have to have faith
.If I just show a little courage .
...I can say the words I've been longing to, but have kept shut inside...
...Lance.


What's more important? Being afraid that the sky will fall... ...or having faith that it won't?
Stop here!
But...!
It is.
You make it sound so simple!
Smile
...You're right.


Nothing is sure in life ..
.. but there's always love
...Always.
I love you.
Rustle
If I asked you to marry me now...
...would you say yes?
Smile
Why don't you give it a try?
The Seduction Bid The End

Shojo Manhwa Scans

The Seduction Bid

Amanda Browning

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Ruby

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